

United States Government
MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 23, 1998

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF : Brian T. Kelly, Red Wolf Field Projects Coordinator, Manteo, NC
BTK

SUBJECT: Requests to remove non-problem wolves from private land

TO: Art Beyer, Wildlife Biologist, ARNWR, Manteo, NC
Michael Morse, Wildlife Biologist, ARNWR, Manteo, NC
Jennifer Gilbreath, Wildlife Biologist, ARNWR, Manteo, NC

I want to follow-up and clarify my comments from our discussion at last week's staff meeting regarding the above subject. As we discussed, there are several reasons for again trapping Lux Farms (and thus other private landowners who request we remove wolves that are not causing a problem). However, in the absence of a finished work plan, I wanted to elaborate, in writing, why fulfilling these requests are troublesome to our program.

In both a book chapter discussing threats to endangered species recovery, and at the recent conference in Seattle, I articulated 2 primary threats to recovering the red wolf. First, is hybridization. Second, is public acceptance of wolves, in particular our current rules that allow landowners to request the removal of wolves without an associated problem. The threat hybridization represents to recovery will depend on a variety of factors, some of which will require data that we currently do not have. Our rules represent a threat for 3 reasons: (1) they require significant manpower to sustain the effort, (2) such removals have an unknown effect on aiding coyote colonization and hybridization, and (3) by removing wolves that are established and not causing a problem we are slowing the establishment of a red wolf population. Although all represent threats, (1) and (2) are potentially very serious. With manpower diverted to these requests, we can't collect the data we need to assess the hybridization threat, nor can we adequately address normal population monitoring tasks. If removing wolves contributes in some way to hybridization, which in theory it could, we are contributing to the hybridization of the northeastern NC red wolf population by our own actions. Thus our rules may be significantly compromising the sustainability of this landmark program. Hence, my frustration regarding our obligation to respond to such requests. We are charged with conducting red wolf recovery and the fact that our own actions may be detrimental to that goal troubles me, especially since it is for no reason that serves the public good but instead appears only to serve the economic interest of a few landowners.

cc: Chris Lucash, Red Wolf Recovery, Townsend, TN